

Practical Relaxation - HealthandWellbeing@Work 2010

Many of us feel under pressure increasingly as we try to juggle our working and family lives.

How can we possibly get to a relaxation class when you have precisely 5 minutes from leaving work to pick up the kids, or the games kit to prepare for the next day?

The truth is it is difficult. We need to start to train ourselves to build some simple techniques into our every day life.

What works for one person may not work for another.

Last year Professor Kathy Sykes from Bristol University embarked on a mission to get to the bottom of the benefits of relaxation. She found that when she didn't have the time to partake in her normal 30 minutes a day of relaxing and listening to music she was grumpier, more tired and less able to concentrate. The investigation went from philosophy to the lab! Long term meditation alters the brain wave patterns and can result in changes in the actual structure of the cortex, the outer part of the brain. Data has shown that meditation can play a role in reducing stress, improving emotion regulation and slowing the effects of ageing on brains ie slowing the normal decrease in mental agility, ability to learn new things and memory that comes with age. Pretty amazing stuff.

Building meditation into your day is by no means easy, but for just 5 minutes a day I can guarantee you will feel better.

As you learn relaxation techniques, you will become more aware of muscle tension and other physical sensations of stress. Once you know what the stress response feels like, you can make a conscious effort to practice a relaxation technique the moment your muscles start tense. This can prevent stress from spiralling out of control.

Remember that relaxation techniques are skills, as with any skill your ability to relax improves with practice. Be patient with yourself. Stay motivated to reduce the negative impact of stress on your body and to experience a greater sense of calm in your life.

I would like to share with you some simple techniques for relaxation that require no cost or equipment and even better, they can be done anywhere!

Contd. Practical Relaxation

Alternate Nostril Breathing

According to the yogis, when the breath continues to flow in one nostril for more than two hours, as it does with most of us, it will have an adverse effect on our health. If the right nostril is involved, the result is mental and nervous disturbance, if the left nostril is involved the result is chronic fatigue and reduced brain function. The longer the flow of breath in one nostril, the more serious the illness will be.

- 1) close the right nostril with your right thumb and inhale through the left nostril
- 2) Immediately close the left nostril with your right ring finger and little finger and at the same time remove your thumb from the right nostril and exhale through this nostril
- 3) Inhale through the right nostril. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and exhale through the left nostril. This completes one full round.

DIY Head Massage

Massage your head starting from the sides, working towards the top, then towards the front and finally to the back of your head. Grasp fistfuls of hair at the roots and tug gently, keeping knuckles close to your scalp. Place the thumb of your left hand under the left occipital area (base of the head) and thumb of your right hand under the right occipital area and relax the tight muscles by using a rubbing movement. Place your left hand on your right shoulder near your neck. Using medium pressure, squeeze the shoulder muscle that starts at the base of your neck. Work your way outwards along your shoulder to your arm. Change and work the other side.

Palming Technique

Rub your hands together to generate a little heat within your palms. Gently cup them and put them over your closed eyes. Leave your hands there for ten seconds and concentrate on the warmth of your hands. Breathe deeply in and out while you are concentrating on your hands. Enjoy that moment of being, no one is demanding anything of you. When you take your hands away slowly open your eyes. See if you feel calmer.

Breathe Deeply

This technique is good for beginners because breathing is a natural function. Focus all attention on your breathing. Working to a count of 4, breathe in for 4, hold for 4, breathe out for 4, hold for 4. This completes 1 round, continue in your own time.

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Healing Cloud Meditation

You can read this and record yourself speaking so that you can just switch of to your own instruction.

I want you to visualize in your minds eye,
a beautiful cloud hovering above your head.

This cloud can be golden, pink, white or sparkly

This cloud is filled with warm, loving,
healing energy from the Universe.

Note its bright color and

how it makes you feel warm and comfortable.

Now watch this cloud as it floats down through your head,
it is swirling though your head bringing you a feeling of love and healing.

Keep watching this cloud as it floats down
through your neck and shoulders.

Allow the energy of this cloud to release all of the toxins
from your physical body.

Now the cloud is floating down through your chest and belly
giving you the feeling of warmth and love.

The cloud is now floating down through your pelvic area
and branches off into both legs.

Again, watch this cloud as it slowly makes it way down
each leg into your feet.

Allow this cloud to swirl through each foot
as you feel them becoming warmer and lighter.

Dissolving any negativity into the ground through the cloud.

It hovers just under your feet, and now starts to return up the legs

Travelling up to the knees and into the hips absorbing negativity and leaving in its wake
Brilliant light.

The cloud travels up through the abdomen shining light and healing energy

And up through the chest into the shoulders

You can feel the warmth and healing light of the cloud as it moves up to your neck

Relaxing every vertebrae as it travels

Now the cloud travels back up through your head, relaxing your face, your jaw

And up into your scalp.

The cloud hovers above your head and you can just be aware of any areas that still feel tense

Any areas that are holding on, you can take the cloud there and say 'body relax, body relax'

The cloud travels to the top of your head, and you start to move your fingers and toes and slowly slowly open
your eyes.

Get in contact if you have any questions. Victoria